

# THE HANDICAPPED EXPERIENCE CHRIST

(THE HEC PROGRAM)

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A Resource for Ministry to and with the  
Handicapped and Their Families

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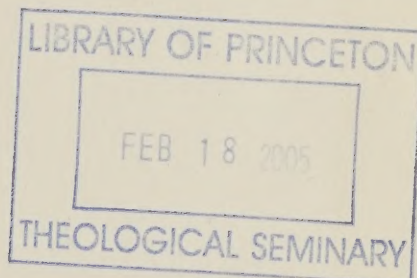
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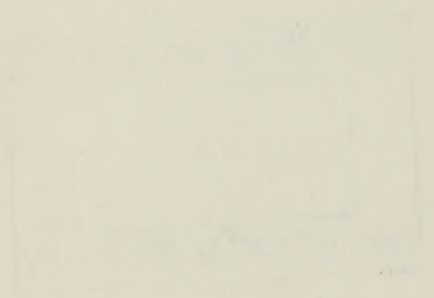
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# THE HANDICAPPED EXPERIENCE CHRIST

(THE HEBREW AND THE GREEK)

A HISTORY OF THE HEBREW AND THE GREEK  
A HISTORY OF THE HEBREW AND THE GREEK



THE HEBREW AND THE GREEK

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## PREFACE

Already mentioned in the Plan of Pastoral Action for  
Family Ministry<sup>1</sup>, the importance of ministry for handicapped  
members of the family was emphasized appropriately in the  
United States Bishops' Pastoral Statement on the Handicapped.  
In that statement of pastoral concern which called for han-  
dicapped people "to become equal partners in the Christian  
community" by eliminating injustices to them and overcoming  
ignorance and apathy, the Bishops pointed out: "The central  
importance of family members in the lives of all handicapped  
people, regardless of age, must never be underestimated.  
They lovingly foster the spiritual, mental and physical de-  
velopment of the handicapped person and are the primary  
teachers of religion and morality. Ministers working in  
the handicapped apostolate should treat them as a uniquely  
valuable resource for understanding the various needs of  
those they serve."<sup>2</sup>

Concern for handicapped persons and the effort to renew  
the Church's ministry for families with handicapped members  
has precipitated a search for model programs that effectively  
minister to the handicapped by affirming their value and role  
within the Christian community. It is, therefore, with joy  
that the Handicapped Encounter Christ (HEC) program is pre-  
sented here.

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1. A Vision and Strategy, USCC Publications Office, 1978,  
p. 9.
  2. Origins, November 30, 1978, vol. 8, no. 24, pp. 374-375.

This particular program came as the result of the compassionate and loving concern of one man and is a genuine example of effective like-to-like ministry recommended in the Plan of Pastoral Action for Family Ministry. "Attention should be given to another factor that will help to form family ministers who can truly serve. Notably we point to the importance of like-to-like ministry, whereby people with similar experience and inclination help others."<sup>3</sup>

Mr. John Keck of Ossining, New York found that he was separated from the rest of the society and treated differently because he was disabled. This caused him to undergo an unexpected personality change because people treated him as less than a whole human being. People generally do not respond in a Christian way to those who are handicapped. Consequently, John Keck realized the need for approaching ministry to the handicapped in a much more enlightened, sensitive and positive fashion.

When he was able to walk again and had participated in a number of profound retreat experiences, he decided to do all he could to share God's loving concern and care in a non-condescending manner so that others could have similar experiences that would help them to see what disability did to their lives.

Resulting from John's experience, this resource booklet is presented so that others might do the same or learn from

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3. Op. cit., p. 3.



the HEC experience of ministry to and with the handicapped.

Handicapped Encounter Christ is a very young, but already-proven program, which allows and even invites improvement and development. Basically, it consists of a three-and-one-half day religious retreat experience that responds to a variety of needs surfaced by handicapped people. It has mainly come out of Roman Catholic background, but is ecumenically open to other denominations. This booklet will present a description of the program, its history, and general direction. Two actual formats of the HEC program are included to show how it can be adapted to local conditions and needs. To date, program participants have ranged in age from 14-87. Moreover, they have displayed a variety of disabilities including cerebral palsy, polio, blindness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, congenital birth defects, strokes, epilepsy, traumatic accidents and deafness.

A deep sense of appreciation and esteem is due to all those who have made this publication possible, especially Mr. John Keck<sup>4</sup> who wrote the text and Ms. Elly Murphy and Ms. Charlett Bundy of the Department of Education for their editorial assistance.

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Representative for Family Life  
Department of Education, U.S. Catholic Conference

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4. For direct information on HEC, write: Mr. John Keck,  
Turkey Farm, Spring Valley Road, Ossining, New York,  
10562



## SECTION I

### ATTITUDES TOWARD THE HANDICAPPED

In America's multi-level, competitive fast-paced society, a concept of wholeness is closely linked with superior physical and mental abilities. Deviation from socially held ability norms is seldom tolerated. Individuals, therefore, are categorized and labeled because of sex difference, physical dexterity, intellectual functioning and physical appearance. The Ideal American becomes a handsome well-proportioned, well-coordinated, alert, well-dressed individual whose thoughts and behaviors never push the outer limits of the "conventional." Such outward symbols as "the right toothpaste", attendance at the "good schools", reverence for the free enterprize system, and the willingness with which he or she swears to produce an exact replica of what already exists, are all part of being a whole person within our society.

Within this culture, some provisions have been made for those who act differently. Individuals whose behavior differs greatly from socially determined norms are placed either in mental institutions or in prisons. Those whose ideas differ too radically are labeled as spys, criminals, or misfits. In like manner, and even more acutely differentiating, is physical difference, which historically has engendered extreme reaction in the larger



society. Black skin or a large nose, for example, can immediately assign people into undesired social categories which place on them great pressures for expected behavior. Frequently, these pre-determined assumptions are so strong that the "truth" of the assumptions becomes a hurtful belief for those on whom it has been imposed.

Society's attitude toward the physically disabled is in many ways more handicapping than the disability itself, for it claims recognition of worth, empathy with the plight of the disabled, and solicitous treatment of those with physical anomalies, but in fact, makes them totally useless within a social structure that pretends to care.

Several approaches have been used and continue to be used when dealing with the "problem" of the physically handicapped. One striking approach effectively used in Nazi Germany was simply to eliminate those who were physically or mentally disabled. Even today, many Americans assume that the disabled are less than whole persons. The Anglo-American approach, however, has been to lump similar disabilities into educational groups and/or programs, then proceed to define what each group's educational capacities or capabilities might be. For example, the blind are frequently encouraged to express any musical talents, and perhaps because of their mobility despite the loss of vision, are generally considered to have equal, if not superior intellectual ability. The deaf, on the

other hand, because of their inability to speak clearly, and their obvious difficulty with communication skills, are often labeled retarded and incapable of making real contributions to society in general. Blind or deaf individuals can, however, move easily from place to place, so that their mobility causes some people to consider them novelties or oddities.

The physically disabled who are motorically impaired pose multiple problems. They are noticeable. A faltering gait, a wheel chair, or an inability to keep still at appropriate times is associated with lack of intellectual capacity, and therefore inability to contribute.

Deviant or handicapped individuals seem to be consistently categorized so as to negate the possibility for individuality. For the purposes of this program, therefore, it seems important to delineate between the terms handicapped and disabled. A disability is something which prohibits manual or intellectual dexterity and is an inconvenience when one wishes to function at a given task. A handicap is closely related to a physical, mental or emotional disability. A handicap prevents the individual from dealing with or adjusting to a disability. Therefore, if we use the above definitions for those terms, a large percentage of the total population is disabled and/or handicapped. Actual physical disability and ensuing handicaps have caused for many a much more debilitating process than would be necessary if society

truly accepted and treasured individual differences and contributions.

"Disability appears to be as much a problem for the nondisabled majority as it is for the disabled minority. Maladjustment in normal individuals with respect to physical disability is widespread. However, we cannot change our society overnight, and social attitudes often present problems that can be dealt with only indirectly.

"It appears that a dead end has been reached. If disability is relatively fixed, and society is relatively inflexible, that leaves only the person."<sup>1</sup>

As youngsters or adults continue living with a disability, the treatment that they receive from those around them contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>2</sup> In other words, if for a long enough period of time an individual is expected to behave in certain patterns, that person will act in those patterns, and most damaging of all, will come to believe that this is the only, correct way in which to behave. The self-image of such individuals is generally severely distorted; frequently, a positive self-image is almost non-existent.

For the more severely physically disabled or for those who are multiply disabled, institutionalization is sometimes

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1. William M. Cruickshank. ed., Psychology of Exceptional Children and Youth (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971, p. 16.
  2. Ibid., pp. 87-88.



necessary or desired by families. The process of long-term institutionalization frequently has devastating emotional and physical effects.<sup>3</sup>

The problems of public financial aid, architectural barriers, or the legal rights of deviant individuals are secondary concerns within the framework of HEC's goals; to be accepted, respected, and considered as a whole person as one is, while at the same time presenting an environment in which the person is challenged to grow to his or her fullest potential. The individual's contribution and the validity of his or her feelings are of utmost importance. In this way, the attitude of HEC is (ideally) in opposition to the general misguided attitudes of society.

Perhaps the most devastating attitude of society in general and churches in particular, is that of gentle patronization, clothed in a facade of deep concern for the welfare of the physically disabled individual. Programs, workshops, separate recreation programs, special enrichment programs, and crusades can so poignantly exploit the fragile self-image of even the strongest disabled person so that any help the programs set out to provide is nullified.

"Except for psychiatric cases, the following generalizations seem reasonable:

1. No variation in physique requires psychological  
maladjustment.

3. Ibid., pp. 31-34.

2. If an emotional handicap exists in a person who has a physical disability, it does not stem directly from the disability but has been mediated by social variables.
3. The mediation between physical status and psychological behavior occurs in the following way:
  - (a) The person lacks a tool that is required for behavior in the culture and knows that he or she lacks it.
  - (b) Other individuals perceive this lack and devalue him or her for it.
  - (c) The person accepts the judgment of others that he/she is less worthy (or to the degree that he/she is a product of the culture, judges himself/herself less worthy) and devaluates himself/herself."<sup>4</sup>

Within the structure of organized churches (as well as within the structure of the society in general), attitudes persist bordering on actual emotional deprivation for the physically disabled. Some religious apostolates to the handicapped encourage the physically disabled to be complacent, offer prayer for the world and bear their affliction silently, without encouraging a more positive sharing.

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4. Ibid., p. 14.

Funds are given by some organizations to provide transportation expenses for pilgrimages to various shrines in the hope of obtaining miraculous cures. (Belief in cures or other miracles is not the point of discussion here). Programs offered by these efforts made "on behalf of the disabled", perpetuate the same values held by society in general--that being physically disabled is to be less than a whole person. If one can be "cured", one can then be a whole person. It is important to note that in the gospel accounts of Christ's healings, at no time does Christ indicate that the specific disability has been impairing the wholeness of the individual, rather he indicates that sins (perhaps what might be called in psychological terms, inner handicaps) are forgiven. Only then are those people made whole again.

A seemingly poor assumption has been drawn from Christ's use of the word "sin" while involved in the healing process. Some elements of Christianity still equate physical disability with sin. This attitude also is out of touch with the modern functional theory in the field of Sociology of Religion<sup>5</sup>, in which the scientific approach to society and religion coupled with knowledge of psychological development negates the "group mind" concepts prevalent in the last century.

It appears that many efforts to help disabled individuals,

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5. Thomas F. O'Dea, The Sociology of Religion (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), Chapter 1.



no matter how well-intentioned, fall far short of really providing them with the acceptance and contribution they need to be part of society and to consider themselves as whole persons.

## SECTION II

### ATTITUDES OF THE HANDICAPPED TOWARD SELF

Providing an atmosphere and experiences which nurture a positive self-image is perhaps the most obvious need of handicapped individuals. Striving for recognition of a person's basic good to some degree is crucial because of the negative feelings about self held by the majority of disabled people. These often destructive feelings can be at the heart of non-actualizing living, infantile human relationships, a distant relationship with God, and a non-existent commitment to service to anyone but self.<sup>1</sup>

Changing these dehumanizing attitudes seems a definite part of the gospel message to love one another, which hopefully is the reality of a Christian experience.

All physically disabled people have not been disabled since birth. Those who have lived with disability since birth and/or early childhood have had years to grow in a particular life style. Therefore, if a person's self-concept is poor, partially as a result of society's reaction and his or her own reaction to the disability, the person has had many years of reinforcement and resists change. If, however, an individual becomes disabled later in life, he or she has not experienced a lengthy, negative

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1. Samuel A. Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), Chapter 5.

reinforcement. But, any profound physical change can affect even the most positive attitudes. In working with individuals disabled since birth and those recently disabled, common self-attitudes appear.

An individual's self-attitude results largely from the family's attitude toward him or her, as well as general social attitudes.<sup>2</sup> Since a disabled person often spends more years living with parents or relatives than do non-disabled people, the family attitude has a great impact on self-image. Society's radical view of wholeness and disability discussed above, adds little to the hopes for positive self-image from outside the family.

When a disabled child is born into a family, or becomes disabled in childhood, the child often becomes the center of family attention. This is due in part to the parents' guilt feelings and the disabled person's demand for time and energy to provide for his or her physical needs. Frequently, an all-consuming absorption in self-interest results which does not change as the person ages. A lack of stimulation is common in nondisabled people as well, but continuing dependence for basic survival needs tends to intensify self-centeredness.

Strong feelings of inferiority are often coupled with inordinate self-interest. Disabled people frequently come to believe that difference is not acceptable, not

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2. William M. Cruickshank ed., Psychology of Exceptional Children and Youth (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971, p. 14.

encouraged, and not respected.

The qualities mentioned above--self centeredness and inferiority-- may seem unrelated, but actually feed each other, and at their base cause great internal pain and pose questions of loveability. The disabled individual can believe that the family cares for him or her out of a sense of obligation, a feeling of guilt, or to expiate for some "sin." If these feelings are present, then to recognize that one will not be able to succeed by accepted standards may produce deep-seated doubts about personal worth.

In society's lifestyles one of the great measurements of self-worth is accomplishment. The disabled person can rarely achieve in this milieu. Consequently, there exists a reinforced feeling of worthlessness and poor self-image.

When people do not believe in their intrinsic value, their loveableness, it becomes difficult to reach out in friendship. One then accepts being the receiver of friendship. If others take the time and exert the effort to recognize my worth, I may either disbelieve them and reject their efforts, or simply continue to be a recipient without the outward reaching needed for mutual positive regard. As a result, individuals who so desperately need the growth opportunities of friendship frequently in effect resist them. Security is preferred to the risk of human relationships which may demand less self-centeredness,



and challenge the disabled individual to believe in his or her own loveability and self-worth.

Another quality often present among the disabled is a great capacity for passivity. Even though persons can be self-centered and demanding about basic care needs, they can be oblivious to their own obligation to take control of their lives. Often they exist at the whim and fancy of what others feel is good or important. It seems all too easy for disabled individuals to allow this to happen, since they are easily manipulated by others' approval, though what they are expected to do may be in exact opposition to what they really want to do.

It seems obvious then that the self-worth of the disabled is easily questioned and that the process of "normal" self-image development among the disabled is damaging to their personal self-actualization and acceptance.

### SECTION III

#### GOALS OF HANDICAPPED ENCOUNTER CHRIST ( HEC)

The main thrust of HEC is to provide an atmosphere and experiences which can nurture spiritual growth for persons who attend and willingly participate to their fullest in the challenge of the weekend. HEC deals with basic Christian beliefs which challenge people to realize

their full human potential in loving God, self and human-kind. The theology presented in HEC attempts to bring deeper gospel meaning to every phase of each person's life.

HEC is not

Doing good for poor unfortunates,  
Bearing a cross,  
Pitying self,  
Manipulating people,  
Comparing degrees of disability.

HEC is

Songs and celebrations,  
Silliness and quiet,  
Dance and sharing,  
Giving and praying:

In all things HEC is God.<sup>1</sup>

The belief that the Christian message must be presented in a dynamic, personal way leads HEC to establish the following goals. First and foremost is to share the good news of Christ risen. Through committing experience, participation, and receiving information, those participants can reflect on their own lives, therein seeing the dying/new life/participation they share with Christ Jesus. This core goal then, nurtures several secondary goals which are self-explanatory.

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1. The HEC Brochure.

1. To increase the handicapped individual's awareness of self-worth and call to the fullness of Christian life.
2. To establish a positive identification for disabled people with a larger non-disabled community which the handicapped, heretofore, have had little opportunity to establish on their own.
3. To increase communication between the disabled and non-disabled communities.
4. To normalize a weekend experience as much as possible for physically disabled people.
5. To encourage the handicapped person toward more independence and sociability.
6. To provide for those handicapped confined to institutions some time away from an institutional environment, a time of living care frequently not provided in the institutional setting.
7. To offer an opportunity for parents and/or relatives of handicapped persons to have some time away from the direct responsibility of caring for the physical needs of their son, daughter, or relative.

One of the above mentioned goals implies that the non-disabled will care for the physical needs of the handicapped during the weekend. These goals, then, are offered to any disabled or non-disabled person who honestly wishes to participate in the HEC experience. In adequate team preparation, not only the care for physical needs is discussed,



but the emotional and psychological needs of the disabled are discussed in some detail by a team member trained in behavioral science.

"...when you have a reception, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just."<sup>3</sup>

Hopefully, HEC will help each person respond in deeper unison in faith.

HEC exists because society does not believe that every man is equal to his brother, every woman to her sister.

HEC happens because society labels individuals as handicapped; such labels dehumanize.

HEC begins over and over so that blind folks, those in wheelchairs and folks with tottering step, see themselves as valuable humans with great gifts to give the world.

HEC becomes a needed experience wherein person meets person, recognizes his/her beauty and acknowledges his/her disabilities.

HEC recurs so that people can find and nurture their friendship with God.

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3. "The Gospel of Luke," 14:13 - 14, New American Bible.

SECTION IV

THE HISTORY OF HEC

In the Church, there is diversity of service, but unity of purpose...the laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ, and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the World.<sup>1</sup>

With the convening of the Second Vatican Council a re-evaluation of the laity's role within the Church was set into motion. Spiritual retreats, which had throughout Church history been a vital part of Christian life, were renewed. During the middle ages the role of the clergy in conducting religious retreats was well established, and the laity's participation in a leadership capacity was extremely rare or almost non-existent. In response to the rather clearly stated need for lay involvement in the Second Vatican Council Documents,<sup>2</sup> the laity was gradually encouraged to participate more completely in retreat programs, and even to become part of planning and designing spiritual retreats.

Among the first lay-involved retreat programs was the Cursillo do Christianidad, or Short Journey in Christianity, originating in the Spanish Church. This retreat program was an experiential three-day program focusing on piety, study and action. In the greater New

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1. "Constitution on the Church," The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II. (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1967), p. 37.

2. Ibid., pp. 36-94 passim.

York area the Cursillo community (those having experienced the Cursillo de Christianidad), has sparked several other retreat movements.

However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view of leading them to faith, or to believers with a view of instructing and strengthening them and motivating them toward a more fervent life. 'For the love of Christ impells us' (2 Cor. 5:14), and the words of the Apostle should echo in every Christian heart. 'For woe to me if I do not preach the gospel' (1 Cor. 9:16).<sup>3</sup>

Several varieties of encounter weekends for youth and adults have become popular in the Church in the United States.

The Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) program (HEC was loosely affiliated with it for a time) was one of the first retreat movements which in theory and practice, prescribed that the layperson selected as weekend director choose the team and the spiritual director. It would seem then, that the laity in the church, at least in name, has been given responsibilities heretofore thought only to belong to religious and clergy.

HEC, a retreat program for the physically disabled,

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3. Ibid., p. 38.



(the letters HEC stand for Handicapped Encounter Christ), takes its name as a multilevel descriptive term. The use of the word "handicapped" allows those who are severely disabled to know that they are welcome. It also implies the realization that all people, disabled or non-disabled, are faced with self-imposed handicaps and/or handicaps imposed on them from other sources.

Handicapped Encounter Christ (HEC) expresses both the commonality of disabled and nondisabled who participate. HEC takes its direction principally from the laity; priests and religious act in an advisory capacity. HEC is not opposed to input from clergy and religious who serve as part of the directing group, but it does emphasize that the decisions and format of the weekend are not designed solely by them.

As a retreat experience for physically disabled people, HEC was started for two basic reasons. First, established retreat movements within most Christian denominations were willing to take only those mildly disabled people capable of independence. These denominations were aware of the severely disabled but seemed afraid to work with them. Also, many people held the belief that the more severely disabled individuals were also more mentally limited, a common assumption in society today. In fact, many churches also held this attitude. People often distrusted the physically disabled, assumed mental retardation, and were afraid to cope with severe physical needs. It was also

assumed that the physically disabled were ill. It is not difficult to realize, therefore, that with this mentality there were few adequate retreat programs.

The physically disabled needed immediate active participation in a program not only designed to meet their physical needs, but principally to meet their spiritual needs and help their families. However, such a program was slow in developing.

Recognizing the basic needs of the disabled resulted from a lay person's nine year effort with the physically disabled in an Ohio camp for crippled children. These young people had human needs which were manifest in their tremendous desire to be treated as "normal" persons, to do the things which "normal" people do. This camp experience, plus education and field experience in special education programs, intensified the realization of their needs which motivated the development of the HEC retreat program.

The HEC idea was first conceived in 1973 as a result of working in Teens Encounter Christ. One key concept stressed in working with these young people was that a human being is intrinsically loveable; a concept which physically disabled people seem to question far more than most nondisabled people. The youth retreats proved successful in giving young people a meaningful religious experience which helped them believe more in their own worth

and loveableness. This program, therefore, offered possible core material for a similar retreat experience for the physically disabled.

As originally planned, there would be 15 disabled and 15 nondisabled young people on a weekend. At the outset the nondisabled would be given a short introduction in physical care for the disabled. All participants would then experience the weekend together. The disabilities would be secondary to the spiritual experience which the total group would share, thus providing a way to prove the humanness common to both physically disabled and non-disabled. This type of grouping would also expose each group to the other, thereby destroying myths created and sustained by ignorance and lack of contact.

Early in 1973 an Atonement priest, Father John Saltzman, who was active in retreat work at Graymoor, a large, multi-apostolic complex in Garrison, New York was approached with the HEC idea. Practical matters such as team, format, location, etc. were discussed. Planners decided to follow some of the TEC format and ideas. By now the TEC program was well-established. It could provide not only a viable community to receive the physically disabled, but an involvement for the TEC participants as well. Further planning for HEC continued.

Then in August, 1973, the TEC Council (governing body) was approached with the idea of a November retreat for



the disabled. Unfortunately, the Council tabled the idea. Finally, in December, the Council gave permission to begin preliminary plans. April of 1974 became the target date for the first HEC retreat.

Three people were to direct and plan the weekend; Sister Nancy Mehlem, O.P., because of her expertise in special education; a member of the TEC Council; and John Keck who originated the HEC idea. When these directors met it was necessary to change the original plan. The idea of 15 disabled and 15 nondisabled was not approved by the TEC Council. As a result of that decision, the directors chose, instead, a very large team of 34. The majority of the team members had already experienced a TEC weekend so they would be familiar with the retreat experience. They would also provide one-to-one care for the disabled. Then the team met in preparation for the retreat. (Team meetings will be explained in a later section.) The first HEC occurred in April 1974 from a Saturday morning through Monday evening, with 23 disabled participants and a team of 34.

Immediately after some positive feedback from HEC #1, plans began for HEC #2 to take place in July. A schedule was then formulated for the coming year which proposed four weekend retreats. These weekends materialized as did three more weekends in the New York area during the following year. The movement spread to Washington, D.C.

then to Tucson, Arizona and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

With the rapid growth and large involvement of people outside the TEC community, it soon became apparent that HEC needed to take its own direction without being controlled by the TEC Council. HEC needed autonomy and the right to make decisions. A 22-member committee, including disabled and nondisabled HEC participants, met to decide HEC's direction. After lengthy discussion, the committee reached the decision to break with the TEC affiliation. In May 1975 HEC became autonomous.

A small number of disabled people were involved in leadership roles but it seems desirable to involve more. Transportation for these HECers determines the extent of their involvement since they live in a 200 mile spectrum in the New York metropolitan area. Hopefully, the core involvement of more disabled people, plus new leadership plans, will enable HEC to continue growing toward its maximum potential.

## SECTION V

### WEEKEND THEMES

The basic theme of HEC is the dying, rising, and going forth which threads through the Christian experience. In other words, the Paschal Mystery is central to this HEC experience and holds a key place in the weekend as it does in the TEC weekend experience.

Because of its centrality the entire weekend is designed around the paschal mystery theme. Friday evening is set aside for familiarization with self and others, as well as generally getting acquainted. Saturday is spent studying one's relation to God, and in finding those inner parts we wish to discard and die to. The Sunday theme is new, changed life.

Monday's emphasis is directed toward beginning a changed life and re-entering the everyday world with the Good News that has been discovered during this weekend.

Part of the entire weekend experience is to challenge and explore one's thoughts, attitudes and individual relationship with God as it is related to the Paschal Mystery and to each individual's life. Self-exploration is related directly to the basic Paschal Mystery theme.

As part of encountering self, others, and God, the issue of being handicapped is confronted directly and discussed openly and honestly.

The entire weekend experience, then, enables all participants to identify and become part of a gospel Christian community.

The group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. With great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God poured rich blessings on them all. There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale and turn it over to the apostles; and the money was distributed to each one according to his need. (Acts of the Apostles)



## SECTION VI

### WEEKEND FORMAT

To understand more fully the progression and format of the HEC weekend, two schedules used on actual retreat weekends will be discussed in detail. It is important to note that in keeping with the general themes of the weekend, the specific schedule need not be followed rigidly. There is nothing magic in the sequence of events, just as there is no exact formula to approach the experience of God.

The HEC weekend generally lasts for three-and-one-half days. The particular weekends which will be described here lasted from Friday evening through Monday afternoon. The HEC weekend is divided into four major themes, each one having a period of time within the schedule devoted to that theme. The underlying theme of the weekend, as explained previously, is the paschal mystery theme of life, through death, to changed life.

On Friday evening at a designated time and retreat center, participants gather together. An exact schedule with explanation follows.

#### Friday General Theme: Encountering and Discovering

##### 7:30      Arrival of Candidates

The retreatants (candidates) arrive from a wide

geographic area and are transported by volunteer helpers. The arrival times vary due to difficulty in transporting needed equipment (wheelchairs, etc.) and great traveling distances.

### Music and Snacks

For many of those arriving it has been a long trip to unfamiliar areas with unfamiliar people. Availability of snacks and music plays an important part in making strangers comfortable with one another and providing a homelike atmosphere.

### 8:15 Opening Prayer

This prayer begins the weekend and asks God's blessings on our mutual endeavor. It should be simply stated.

### 8:20 Orientation Talk

A short orientation talk explains the mood of the weekend and tries to calm any fears. Freedom to participate or not to participate in any part of the weekend is stressed. Facilities for sleeping, bathrooming, and medical assistance, etc., are explained, and the challenge is offered to leave the retreat on Monday as a changed person.

As a reaction to this talk, table groups are assigned and some time is spent in getting acquainted with group members. Then a name for the table is chosen by common consent. This establishes some immediate identity with a small group within the retreat weekend group. From then on when speaking to the larger group, participants are asked to introduce themselves with their names and their tables' names. Others at the tables are encouraged to show obvious support by loud applause for the person's willingness to contribute. After the tables have been named, and some graphic display of the name rendered, one or two table members explain to the larger group how that name was chosen and what it means.

9:00     Ideals of Adulthood Talk

The ideals of adulthood is a short talk designed to begin discussion within the table groups. It is not a God-oriented talk. This talk explores the process of choosing and reaching ideals and goals. It defines ideals. Emphasis is placed on the need for goals and ideals to be self-determined rather than other-determined. It also discusses the continuing change in goals and ideals, and finally challenges participants to form some of their own ideals.



As a reaction to the Ideals Talk, each table is asked to discuss the ideas they have just heard and (not simply re-hash what the speaker stated) allowing their discussion to follow its own course in the general topic area. One person is chosen or volunteers to act as a secretary and to share the table group's ideas with the larger group later in the process. A poster incorporating the ideas discussed is also used, and this affords an opportunity for another table member to express ideas by explaining the poster.

10:00 Encountering Self and Others Talk

This talk incorporates ideas about falseness, honesty with self, the multiplicity of selves within one person, various facets of personality (e.g. emotions, intelligence, etc.) and challenges participants toward acceptance and identification of strengths and weaknesses. Emphasis is placed on discovering a person's strengths. The talk also explores the need for change within oneself. Belonging to a group and one's interaction with others is also discussed. The need to encounter others and self is emphasized in this particular talk.

As a reaction, each participant is given a piece

of clay and asked to fashion a symbol of his or her self-image and then place it in relationship to each person at the table. The clay symbols are displayed throughout the weekend so that they can be shared with all participants.

11:00 Meditation on Love of Life

To close the evening, a short meditation on the sacredness of life and the unity of humankind with all living things is presented. A challenge and need to share and choose life are also stressed.

11:10 Snacks and Bed

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the HEC weekend experience especially for the non-disabled, is the actual physical care needed by the more severely disabled. Relationships are quickly formed on a need basis, but friendship frequently blossoms. The actual physical needs, and the desire to communicate these needs, breaks down polite social taboos and enables both parties to enter into more real and meaningful communication.

Saturday General Theme: Discovery of the Need  
to Change and a  
Challenge to be Different

7:30 Arise

Naturally it is necessary that the participants

involved in physical care arise prior to this time. It is stressed that extreme care be taken for a disabled person's feelings of privacy and modesty, and that hygiene is not neglected for those unable to care for their own needs. The attitude should be one of cheerfulness and excitement for facing a new day.

8:15      Meditation on Discovery

For this meditation the entire group gathers in a designated area, perhaps the chapel, to hear some brief thoughts on the need for each of us to broaden our horizons. The idea is pointed out that by our nature we are driven to go beyond ourselves to discover beautiful things in us and in those around us. Mutual willingness to risk discovery is desired.

8:20      Breakfast

Meal time is a time for socialization as well as nourishment. Table groups do not remain together and it is important that everyone try to get to know everyone else. This breakfast is also the first time that some of the participants will be able to meet the kitchen staff. Problems with feeding are handled by anyone who is able to help. Good humor and cheerfulness are encouraged. After

breakfast a time for telling jokes and short humorous stories adds to the general relaxed quality of the meal.

9:30      Encountering God Talk

The encountering God talk consists of two basic parts. The first part concentrates on God's reaching out and to become involved with men and women, and their choice to encounter a loving God; the instances of God reaching and people encountering God as found in Scripture; and the uniqueness of the God-people encounters. The second part deals with how we encounter God in people, words, music, nature, etc., introduces the Word of God (New Testaments), and expresses our desire to hear God and encounter Him. This is the first talk of the weekend that directly labels our search for God, and invites everyone to participate.

As a reaction to this talk each participant is given a New Testament furnished by the American Bible Society. Time is allowed for silent reading, then sharing passages and using the New Testaments. This is encouraged at the tables with the whole group. It is important that braille copies of the Bible are furnished for blind participants as well as large print editions



for those with gross and fine motor control problems to enable them to read more easily.

10:30     The Paschal Mystery Talk

The Paschal Mystery Talk deals with the core experience of Christianity and is central to this weekend. The approach to the Paschal Mystery is generally the death to new life approach common during Lenten liturgies. The emphasis is that as a community in the next few days, people will journey through a look at self, a weeding-out process of that which they do not like, a putting away of old useless things, shedding these "grave clothes", and then coming to a new life which will be controlled by self with the help of God and others.

The summary and poster reaction explained above is once again used. Table ideas are shared with the entire group.

11:30     Break

At this time all participants are urged to take a recreational break, walk around, see the grounds, or just engage in quiet conversation. This enables people not already acquainted to establish some relationship.

12:30     Lunch

See the explanation for breakfast.

1:30

On Being Handicapped Talk

This Talk, as well as the Paschal Mystery Talk, is central to the weekend experience. Information is discussed regarding the social implications of handicapping. It is emphasized that each person is handicapped in some way. Wholeness is discussed. What one does with obvious difference, how one approaches the world with recognized handicaps, and the hopefulness involved in recognizing handicaps and strengths are the central themes. Control of one's destiny regardless of physical disability is also discussed. This talk must be given by a team member with great credibility among the disabled community. Honest feelings must be discussed sincerely and frankly. Since this is the first talk that deals directly with the problems facing the disabled, it naturally can set the mood of honesty and reality for the remainder of the weekend.

Reaction to the Handicapped Talk usually assumes the form of table discussions, then a general discussion with no specific reports from the previous table discussions. Often there is a lengthy question and answer period during which questions of sexuality, worth as a human being, and other topics are discussed.

3:13      Metanoia Talk

The Metanoia Talk is primarily a witness talk. The term metanoia, meaning a complete turning about, is explained using the references to St. Paul's conversion. The idea of a complete change of heart (not merely a surface change), and a long-lasting change with a recognizable difference in lifestyle as a result of a recognition of the need for change, should be the speaker's major focus. The speaker's own change of heart is discussed with an honest discussion of motives and actions centering around that change. The challenge for all present to risk taking a chance and to be open to change is re-emphasized. The reaction to this talk is simply done in a graphic poster and shared by an explanation of that poster. The posters, as in the past, are displayed throughout the meeting room for later inspection.

4:15      Penance Talk

This talk is about reconciliation, joining together what had been separated. It is not an attempt to promote deep guilt feelings for offending God and neighbor. Rather, participants are encouraged to come to their senses as did the

prodigal son, and make a conscious choice for goodness, in other words, putting aside what prevents them from being all they can be. The joy of reconciliation and the need to be reconciled with one another are explored. This talk should be approached simply and with little pedagogy.

A paraliturgical celebration is the reaction to this talk. Participants willing to do so are asked to write on a piece of paper those inner things which they would like to eliminate and for which they willingly seek forgiveness. The papers are then collected and ritually burned. The flame from this fire is used to enkindle a new light of the Paschal Candle which burns continuously throughout the remainder of the weekend and follows the entire group to meals, chapel, etc., as a reminder of their promises. This paraliturgical service is generally done in silence, but singing may accompany the service.

5:15

Private Confession or Break

Opportunity is available for those wishing to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Priests are also available for private confession. Others may wish simply to rest, walk about the grounds or share in small discussion groups.



6:00      Dinner

This major meal of the day is generally joyful after the seriousness of the paraliturgy.

7:15      Signs Talk

This talk stresses the human need for symbolism and emphasizes communication. Symbol becomes sign when it assumes a special personal meaning. Possibly this weekend will become a sign for individuals and the total group. Examples of symbols and signs of the weekend are explained in some detail.

Reaction to this talk takes the form of sign. Cornstarch and water are mixed; participants experiment with the peculiar properties of this mixture. Each person is then asked to express his or her sign value from the cornstarch. Discussions of the various sign values follows. One of the signs emphasized in the signs talk is the sign of the Passover and Last Supper which the Church retains in the form of the Mass.

8:15      Eucharistic Liturgy

A Eucharistic liturgy planned to emphasize the reconciliatory qualities of signs is shared by willing participants. (No one is forced to take part in any of the weekend activities). A foot-

washing service is included with each participant given the opportunity to wash the feet of others present, as a sign of service and love. Baptismal promises are either renewed or individually written and shared, and a service of stoles (a white garment traditionally given at Baptism), is offered to each participant. The liturgical celebration is one of great joy because, symbolically, new life has begun for each participant.

10:15 Palanca

Palanca is a Spanish word meaning lever. This meaning is explained to the group. While retreatants have been spending time together this weekend other Christians have been praying for their successful encounter with Christ. These prayers come in many forms and are offered as a way of pushing down on one end of the "lever" in order to lift the other end (participants). Written expressions of the larger Christian community's concerns and hopes for the weekend are addressed and given to each participant. The general effect of this support helps participants understand that there is a larger community who will support and care for them even though they are not physically present. Palanca is then shared with other participants.

10:45     Meditation on Forgiveness

This short meditation emphasizes the joy of forgiving, the feeling of unity and wholeness, and the excitement of new beginnings.

11:00     Snacks and Bed

Sunday General Theme: Celebration of New,  
Changed Life/Celebration of Community

7:30     Rise

8:15     Meditation on the Risen Christ

This meditation with the entire group centers on the coming of new life by recalling Christ's resurrection into a changed form of life. Participants are asked to put away yesterday and begin a new life. The joy of new life and the excitement of being alive are major themes.

9:30     God, A Community of Life and Love Talk

This talk presents a look at God through "new" eyes. The childhood concepts of God as Santa or warden, are replaced by the concept of a vital and alive God. The need for one another is presented through the illustration of the Trinity whose principal work is to promote being--or love. A challenge is presented in the form of God calling all to new life together as a community.

As a reaction to this talk, each table group is asked to form some symbol, using themselves to express life and love as a community. These symbols are then shared with the entire group.

10:30     Christian Life Talk

The Christian life talk discusses the meaning of being involved in a new life in Christ. It emphasizes that the call to new life must be uniquely individual and that it is a call to love, which can only be an individual response. Being open to all, new and old, and the need for vulnerability are also stressed. The individual's function within the community is discussed. Some personal experience of response, and the results of living a new life, may also be appropriate. As one way of remaining open to the call for new life, prayer is introduced, alone and together. At this time the concept of prayer as a recited formula can be clarified, that is, prayer is a response to a call from God; spontaneous prayer is encouraged. As a response to this talk, table groups are invited to share prayer with each other at some quiet place.

11:30     Break

12:00     Lunch



1:30 People of God Talk

This talk stresses the commonality of all human-kind. The people of God are those who have freely chosen to become aware and respond to the call to newness. Yet, one must always question who is calling. Is it personal motivation or does motivation come from God? It is noted that there is a great variety of calls from God. All people who have an awareness of changed life respond in some way to that call. The call from God to new life, therefore, encompasses Jews, Buddhists, Islams, and Christians of other denominations. The important recognition is that God is calling and reaching. People must choose to respond in their own cultural and individual ways.

The summary and poster reaction is used with this talk.

2:20 The Church in the World Talk

Christ changed the world in fact and in spirit. Thus, all people have a new, special invitation to life. Those who heed this invitation and call are the Church. The Church, then, is not an organization but, rather, a way of life. The next obvious question is what the Church is challenged to do in this world. The response is to do things

that are rather foolish; love enemies, return good for evil, hope for truth even when it hurts, etc. Discussion of the difference between selfish motives and true "Church" motives could also be emphasized. The gospel call to be a fool for Christ and the command to love are emphasized, as well as the need to recognize the necessary, vital support from others.

Reaction to the Church in the world talk takes form in a clown reaction with one or more people participating. The content of this reaction stems from the weekend dynamic at this time. Discussions and questions arising from the weekend itself should be dealt with in a humorous way. As with much of the weekend itself, description without experience leaves a void for the reader.

3:15     Break

4:00     Liturgy

This liturgical celebration emphasizes the role of community in the journey of the people of God. The small community formed here for the weekend, the community of family, and the larger community of humankind are blended into one with the emphasis placed on the brotherhood and sisterhood of all and the equality of each individual within the group.

5:15      Dinner

6:30      Hootenanny

The hootenanny is a songfest celebration of community. There are songs and general exhuberence at welcoming the retreatants into the larger community. This gathering is a visable symbol to the participants that the community, which has been discussed during the day, is a viable real community. Parents of younger participants and friends are especially invited to show their approval for the choice to a changed life. A general party atmosphere prevails with refreshments, singing and, occasionally, limited amounts of dancing.

At a point during the festivities, all are asked to be seated and each retreat participant is introduced individually to the community. Anyone who wishes may speak about his or her experience. The table names are given and explained by a table member. If a raffle has been held to raise money for support of the weekend, winners are chosen at this time.

Then, a more serious note is injected into the festivities; a talk is given on the subject of Christian peace.

The speaker alternates with the singers, giving comments on the verses of the Peace Song. Since there is such variety of response to song, each speaker's talk has a special flavor of its own. At the end of the hootenanny, some form of total community affirmation in song or prayer (generally in a circle with hands held), sends the visitors home and is the signal for the retreat to continue.

8:30      Skits

Just for fun, and because physically disabled individuals seldom have the opportunity to indulge in group make-believe, some time is set aside for planning and executing skits, which have little or nothing to do with the weekend other than providing a time for all to perform and entertain one another. Costumes, makeup, and properties are provided. After a time of preparation, the amateur theatrical productions unfold for the whole group. The expression of joy is contagious and most participants in the retreat willingly don outrageous costumes and happily make fools of themselves for one another.

10:30      Shared Palanca

At the hootenanny much more palanca has been brought in by the community. A time is set aside to share that palanca and thoughts that participants may be



having about the weekend. This offers everyone the opportunity to express themselves in front of a large group of accepting, loving individuals. For some participants, this sharing is the first time they have ever been able to speak in front of a group.

11:00     Meditation on Love

This short meditation expresses the need to love and be loved, and the need to work at loving, not just hoping that love happens. Individuals are encouraged to express their love for one another and for the group.

11:15     Snacks and Bed

Monday General Theme: Living a New Life Among  
Old Things

7:30     Rise

8:20     Meditation on Confidence in Christ

This meditation is presented to the whole group. It stresses the need to get comfortable with one's newfound life, and introduces the obligation to reach out to others and share what has been found. This reaching out process cannot be preachy or condescending, but must reflect a genuine regard for others' lives and their decision to live them as they choose. The challenge is to be changed and to be open to further change without being

afraid of being different.

8:30 Breakfast

9:30 Life-styles Talk

The speaker for the life-styles talk is obliged, first of all, to make the talk appropriate to the participants. This talk is a frank discussion of various life style alternatives, those things that limit or mold life-style choices. The emphasis is on choice, rather than circumstance, and how one changes constantly. The myth that occupations determine life-style is discussed. The Christian life-style, the choice to live for others, is discussed at some length. Discussion is stimulated, and a challenge to choose a Christian life-style is presented.

Reaction to this talk is a general open discussion in which alternatives available for the disabled are discussed. Problems are seldom solved, but possible ideas as to how one might change an institutional setting, or an overprotective family, are discussed.

11:30 Break for Packing

This time is spent packing and arranging for transportation volunteers to take participants home. All belongings -- posters, bibles, clay

images, etc. -- are carefully packed.

12:30     Lunch

1:45     Christianity in Action Talk

The Christianity in action talk explores the possibilities of involvement in the Christian community. Avenues of available work such as telephone hot lines, visits to hospitals, involvement in church related activities, and family communications may be stressed. The emphasis is on the unique contributions of the individual. Causes are not stressed, but genuine, honest involvement with others is emphasized. Those who can write are encouraged to send letters to inmates in prisons, or to write palanca for others making similar weekends. The similarities of the terms "Christianity" and "action," should be the focus for planning this talk.

Reaction to the talk involves using fingerpaints to express Christian involvement and action.

(Fingerpainting is another activity in which few disabled people have been able to participate).

2:45     Beyond HEC Talk

To the whole group (tables are pushed aside at this point in the weekend), the speaker talks

about a "safe togetherness" during the weekend, where people attempt to live a Gospel Christian community, and the need to leave the retreat changed in some way. Reactions to this changed life which people might encounter are also discussed. The reality that all will need one another's support is also stressed. For that support each participant is reminded that there are periodic reunions, newsletters, small get togethers, etc.. Although people separate physically, there is a common bond that draws them together if they have recognized the call to change during this weekend.

Anyone wishing to share further thoughts regarding the weekend is encouraged to do so. The need for all to be joyful together, even in parting, is encouraged.

3:30     Final Liturgy and Commissioning Service

The final liturgy is again one of joy. It does not ignore what people have experienced together, but it also does not dwell on sadness at leaving one another. As a part of the final liturgy a commissioning service takes place. During this service each participant is called to the front of the community and given a list of addresses,



telephone numbers, and birthdays of all present. A cross with the inscription, "Christ is Counting on You", is presented to each participant along with a certificate suitable for framing as a gentle reminder of the challenge offered during the weekend.

In the ancient Christian tradition, a blessing is given to each individual by laying-on hands. After the final service the weekend retreat is over.

#### ALTERNATE SCHEDULE FOR HEC

##### Friday General Theme: Discovering Feelings

8:30 Welcome

One of the leaders begins the weekend by offering a word of welcome.

8:40 Opening Prayer

(See previous schedule.)

8:45 Orientation Talk

(See previous schedule.)

As a reaction to this talk, participants are encouraged to jot ideas in a journal provided for them. Specific time during the weekend will be provided for additional journal writing.

9:15      Introductions

Informal introductions of individuals at the tables.

9:35      Feelings Talk

Ideas to be included in this talk are as follows:  
Getting in touch with feelings. We all have feelings. Feelings are neither good nor bad; they simply are. We sometimes avoid recognizing feelings. We are asked on this weekend to see our feelings and recognize them as they are. Can we live only by feelings? What are your feelings?

As a reaction to this talk, a life-size doll is displayed in a prominent place and individuals are encouraged to speak and write about their present feelings regarding the doll.

A question sheet on feelings is also provided which will serve as a stimulus for table discussion.

10:45      Table Naming

(See previous schedule.)

11:30      Meditation on Looking into Self

Saturday Theme: Becoming Human

7:30      Rise

8:15      Meditation on Humanity

8:30      Breakfast

9:15      Transition Activity

Feelings Cards -- Each person is given five 3x5 cards on which he or she puts one word to describe feelings about self. Each card has a different feeling. The cards are then arranged in order of importance. The first two cards are discussed and each individual tells why he or she feels that way.

9:35      Being Human Talk

Ideas for this talk include: What does it mean to be human? What are things that make us human? It is good to be human. We are a complete part of the universe. It is not good to deny any part of our humanity. We feel, we think, we have fun, etc. We can become more fully human. (Note: This talk is not specifically about God.)

As a reaction to this talk, each participant is asked to make a clay symbol representing what it means to be human. The symbols are then discussed at the tables.

10:45      Being Handicapped Talk

Ideas encompassed in this talk include: Being handicapped is part of our humanity. Discussion of society's labels. Differentiation between

handicapped and disabled. Handicaps are common to all. How do we handicap ourselves? Do we allow part of ourselves to become handicapped? What are psychological handicaps? Do our handicaps determine our perceptions in life? Can we and do we need to overcome disabilities? We need to recognize disabilities realistically, acknowledge them and live around them.

Discussion first takes place in the small table groups and then in the large group.

- 11:30     Free Time
- 12:30     Dinner
- 1:20      Time for Journal Writing
- 1:30      Community of Jesus Talk

Ideas for the talk: Jesus was the human of humans. He said "yes" to life completely. What does this mean? He was completely human (examples from scriptures). Jesus felt and experienced the frustrations we feel. He is an example for us to enter completely into life with total trust in the Father. Jesus still lives and that is good.

The Paschal candle is lit indicating that Jesus is the light. This is followed by a bible paralyturgy in which one leader calls names individually, another leader reads scripture verses



selected by participants, and a third leader hands each participant a New Testament.

2:30     Change - A Human Challenge

Ideas to be included: Change is an integral part of being human. Growth dictates change. Speaker stresses personal experiences of change -- a real turning in life. Change is frightening and also very exciting. Change is a challenge.

Reaction to this talk involves a quiet time to think about change in your own life.

3:00     Penance and Reconciliation

One of the priests speaks briefly about the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Penance parailiturgy is the same as the one described in the previous schedule.

4:00     Free Time

5:30     Dinner

6:00     Selfishness to Servanthood Talk

Ideas to be stressed: Selfishness is easy. Selfishness is part of what we consider self-protection. Sometimes doing good things is selfishly rewarded. We frequently have the idea that we are the center of the universe.

Our inability to accept differences in people is directly related to our own self-centeredness. Can selfishness be changed into usefulness or servanthood? What is real servanthood? How can we make the change from being selfish to being servants? How does God play a part in this change? Can we really love others as much as ourselves?

Reaction to this talk: Two appropriate questions are posed to the group and each table answers among themselves. Posters, symbolizing the whole day, are made and shared with the entire group.

8:00 Liturgy

Service of foot washing included

9:15 Palanca

(See previous schedule.)

10:10 Journal Writing

10:30 Meditation - Jesus in Our Lives

Sunday Theme: Choosing Christianity

7:30 Rise

8:15 Meditation on Making Choices

8:30 Breakfast

9:20      Journal Writing

9:30      Talk: Our Relationship with God

Ideas stressed in this talk: God has called throughout the ages. There is a mutual need between God and people. God loves us with perfect love. God is not Santa, etc. but a genuine lover of his people. God loves individuals and groups. What is an individual relationship with God? The following questions are used for discussion with the tables:

- 1) Think of a person's life in which God plays an important role. What effect has it had on that life and on your life?
- 2) When were you first aware of God?
- 3) As you see it, how has God treated you in life?
- 4) What is your relationship with God?

A poster is also used to show common elements that run through individual relationships with God.

10:30      Talk: Communication between God and People

A group of four people are given five minutes to talk about their prayer life.

As a reaction, everyone is asked to pray by table groups in a suitable place.

12:15     Lunch

1:00     The Cost of Choosing Christianity Talk

These elements should be included: Has Christianity really meant anything in life? Does the core meaning of Christianity demand any conscious decisions? Decisions to live a certain way invariably bring conflict. What does the choice mean personally? How much will I do to live this Christianity? What does it say if my God relationship has never cost me anything? Is it inevitable that if Christianity is taken and lived seriously, one will be persecuted for it?

Reaction: Individuals are asked to answer the following questions and discuss them at the table:

- 1) Have you as yet consciously made a choice to live Christianity and explain it?
- 2) What has Christianity cost someone you know?
- 3) Has your Christianity ever cost you anything?
- 4) How far will you go in trying to live the gospel?



2:00      Christian Community Talk

Ideas to be stressed: The meaning of community.  
What does Christian Community add to that meaning  
of community? The word Christian should not limit  
but expand to include. What does scripture say  
about Christian community? Share experiences  
about this type of community.

Reaction: Non-verbal group expression. After  
some discussion, each table group expresses  
Christian community in a non-verbal symbol.

3:45      Liturgy: Theme of community is emphasized

5:30      Dinner

6:30      Hootenanny

(See previous schedule.)

9:30      Skits

(See previous schedule.)

11:30     Meditation on Peace

Monday Theme: Going Forth

7:30      Rise

8:15      Meditation on the Need to Respond

8:30      Breakfast

9:20      Journal Writing

9:30      Transition: Decisions and Risks

Appropriate questions are formulated and asked to emphasize the need for making decisions and the risks involved.

10:00      Beatitudes Talk

Ideas to be stressed: Our relationship with God offers the greatest challenge to becoming fully human. God lures us more deeply into relationship with Him. With intimacy comes suffering which is needed for growth. With sorrow comes great joy. Jesus has already told us how to live and what to expect. What do the Beatitudes mean?

Reaction: Clown reaction (See previous schedule.)

10:45      Christian Response in Living Talk

Ideas: The essence of the gospel is to love. Explore the meaning of Christian love. (Use St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians) Love --the antidote to selfish demands, the ultimate. What is the meaning of jealousy?

Reaction: Discussion with the entire group

12:00      Free Time

12:30      Dinner

1:15      Time for Writing Palanca for Other HECs

1:45      Beginning Talk

Ideas: A time to come to grips with the past and learn from it. Take the experience and gospel presentations of the weekend - What does it say to me as an individual? Meet the present moment then choose to decide. Begin a new way of living. Life simply is!

2:15      Journal Writing

2:45      Final Liturgy

(See previous schedule.)

## SECTION VII

### WEEKEND PREPARATION

Preparation for the HEC weekend is perhaps as important as the weekend itself. Actual team preparation and selection, selection of adequate facilities, and the ever-present need for fund-raising are discussed in some detail in this chapter. Each aspect of the process is vitally important to the success of the HEC experience. It is obvious that great amounts of time and energy are spent in preparing for each weekend experience. Some idea of what is necessary in preparation is discussed below.

### Team Preparation

Prior to every HEC a large team is selected. Besides the need for table leaders and speakers, people are needed who will provide one-to-one care for the more severely physically disabled people, to help with dressing, eating, etc. This necessitates a large team which also allows for more involvement for nondisabled people.

Within the team, members manifest different strengths. Some are excellent table leaders; others are stimulating speakers. There are some who relate well on a one-to-one basis but would not do well in leadership or speaker roles. Because of its design, HEC gives these people an opportunity for vital involvement which they might not have on other retreat teams.

The team members come from varied backgrounds. They are blue collar workers, professional people, students, lay people, religious, and clergy selected on the basis of their Christian life-style. That is, they are selected because of active gospel involvement, not how eloquently they speak of it. This screening process is carried out because of deep belief that principal impressions of a weekend are experiences of honest community and gospel loving, not remembering the content of long speeches.

The following characteristics come closest to describing qualities desired in team members: flexibility, sensitivity to self and others, nonpatronizing attitude



toward the handicapped, a keen sense of humor, and an ability to laugh at self, avoidance of a verbally overpowering "used car salesmanship" approach to Christianity, an easy ability to divorce oneself temporarily from personal needs, and lastly, the capability of not taking one's role as a team member too seriously.

The actual direction of the weekend and team meetings which is shared by three people, one of whom assumes final responsibility, must blend in harmony through the cooperation of these key individuals. During the team meetings and the weekend itself, the directors act as time keepers, assess the continuity and flow of the weekend, serve as sounding boards for concerns which arise, and interact with the retreat house staff about any business concerns.

Because of liturgical celebrations on the weekend it is necessary to have at least one priest as part of the team. His commitment to HEC and its follow-up activities is very important. Not only is this crucial, but this minister must be a self-actualizing person possessing not only the desired qualities indicated for team members above, but also a deep faith commitment to gospel living and service. An understanding of and ability to celebrate meaningful theologically sound ritual must also be his contribution. Because each of the above mentioned qualities is so vital, not every priest is well-suited to HEC involvement.

Another important member of the team is the music director who must be versed in playing an appropriate instrument, possibly a guitar. This musician must be sensitive to the mood of the moment, have a large repertoire of songs to fit both the unexpected and scheduled moments of song, and an ability to work closely and tirelessly with the directors. Obviously, the music director's position is a very sensitive one.

There is a great need, too, for a responsible individual to plan and direct the serving of all meals. The cook not only plans the meals but recruits a group of volunteers to assist in preparing and serving meals and snacks as well as any needed special diets. Purchasing and soliciting donations of food are the co-responsibilities of both director and cook. The latter must also direct the maintenance of the dining area throughout the weekend and simultaneously see that the staff is integrated into the entire HEC experience.

As an adjunct to the team, there is a core of volunteers who do not function on the weekend itself, but arrange and provide transportation to and from the retreat center. Public transportation is purposely avoided. Integrating lives in providing transportation forces personal contact between disabled and nondisabled. This is often the beginning step for those nondisabled who previously feared being with disabled people. It may also

be the beginning of a HEC involvement for those who are not yet ready for a weekend commitment. This method of transportation becomes a visible sign to the disabled that many people care about their wellbeing. The transportation volunteer group becomes part of a total group of 50-60 people fortunate enough to share in each HEC experience.

To the people involved, then, are given the following responsibilities:

1. To be alert and sensitive to the general feeling of the group. If for example, HECers are restless, to suggest to the directors the need for singing or for a change of activity.
2. To be assigned to a particular individual and to a table group, and to try to get to know as many of the HECers as possible in that group.
3. To be very conscious of the uniqueness and great potential waiting inside each person on the retreat.
4. To be aware that there is no team-candidate differentiation on a HEC weekend.
5. To take time at meals and breaks to get to know everyone on the weekend as well as possible-- each person has a great deal to offer.
6. To be aware that team members are not fearless leaders or fountains of Christian advice. Questions put to team members by those expecting profound immediate advice, should be thrown back to the questioner.

7. On Friday evening at the tables the team is asked primarily to be listeners since each person is encouraged to participate and formulate his or her own ideas as the weekend unfolds.
8. To try to emphasize individual goodness and beauty.
9. To try to have the discussions of talks relate to real life situations.
10. To try to build the idea of a small community at each table.
11. Be an example. Be excited about participation in discussions and reactions.
12. To watch for cliques. Do not break them up, just broaden them by joining.
13. HEC does not try to tire participants, but somehow bedtime is seldom before midnight. As a responsible person, it is important to encourage adequate rest.
14. To trust, to be full of faith and love, while not judging the progress of the weekend or of any individual.
15. If there are problems or questions, resolve them as quickly as possible.
16. Participate, don't anticipate.
17. To enjoy the joyous spirit of the weekend and the celebration that God and people together can cause.

Prior to each HEC weekend, a series of four or five team meetings is held with as many team members as possible. The meetings are held once a week during the month prior to the HEC. The first meeting concentrates on three general



areas. There is getting acquainted, along with an attempt to know each other in some depth. An introduction and explanation of the goals and schedule of the weekend is presented. Lastly, the directors explain the themes of the weekend and ideas for the talks, then ask certain team members to prepare a specific talk, but give them the option to refuse.

The second meeting involves getting the team members better acquainted with one another. Through the use of Scripture exercises, it is hoped that they will begin building a Christ-centered community. People are given time to share their ideas about talks, clarify any confusions, and illicit ideas from the total team for a particular talk. Lastly, each person participates in some exercises which delve into people's attitudes toward the whole idea of handicaps. These are the crucial items of the second meeting; however, some time is also given to beginning fund-raising work.

Meeting number three has more exercises geared to getting to know more deeply one's self, others and one's relationship with God. Part of this knowing self more deeply is to discover one's own handicaps. This, plus a discussion of the team's roles, constitute much of the

meeting. It is important at this meeting, however, that the group worship together as part of their beginning to live a Christian community.

The last meeting begins with a work session designed to gather the necessary details. Directors acquaint the team with the candidates by means of their applications and accompanying letters. At this meeting there should be time for quiet to pray alone and with others, and there should be time to share fears, questions, comments, all that has brought people together up to this point. Then the team should worship together.

#### Facilities

A number of facilities have been used for the HEC retreat weekends; no facility has been designed specifically for the needs of physically disabled. There are some basic conditions necessary for the physical environment; as long as a majority of these are met, then minor problems can be overlooked.

One basic consideration is to have some sleeping rooms on the same floor as the meeting room so as to accommodate those in wheelchairs. The meeting room should be large and airy with ample room to accommodate about 60 people, of whom approximately 20 are in wheelchairs or stretcher carts. If this room is damp it causes unnecessary suffering for people with arthritis.

Ideally, a separated dining room and chapel is helpful for change of scene, but this is not a necessity.

One other factor worth mentioning is that it is easier for the HEC weekend when a team member does the cooking and provides food services, since frequently special diets are needed, and changes are more readily and quickly facilitated with this type of arrangement.

The singular most important aspect of the facility for the weekend is the attitude and cooperation of those who operate the retreat house. Almost any inconvenience can be overcome if the attitude of the retreat house staff is flexible and enthusiastic. The team can and does easily overcome architectural problems. Many times, in fact, team members have acknowledged in retrospect that extra efforts in difficult situations are the very factors which bind them more closely together. Lastly, in an effort to normalize the weekend, a special attempt has been made to use facilities not specifically designed for the physically disabled.

#### CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to describe the HEC program and to in some way determine its effect on the lives of those who participate in it. The program has been explained in some detail and the reasons for its existence have been discussed.

The evidence points toward continuation of the HEC idea. The format and the forms will and must change as HEC revitalizes itself and continues to grow. It would appear, however, that the basic thrust of HEC--the positive recognition of the worth of each life, will continue. It seems that a program designed for disabled excluding non-disabled and the religious aspects of this weekend, would be out of balance, and would inadequately deal with the whole being.

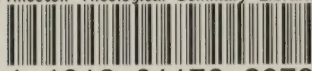
It also seems important to realize that the written words for this work cannot fully express the feeling and "dynamic" that is the experience of HEC. HEC has become much more than a retreat program, a way of life, or an experiential learning situation. It has become for so many so much a part of each person's self that it is integrated into the total fiber of his or her Christian life. For many people, HEC truly expresses Christ's own ministry in the world today.



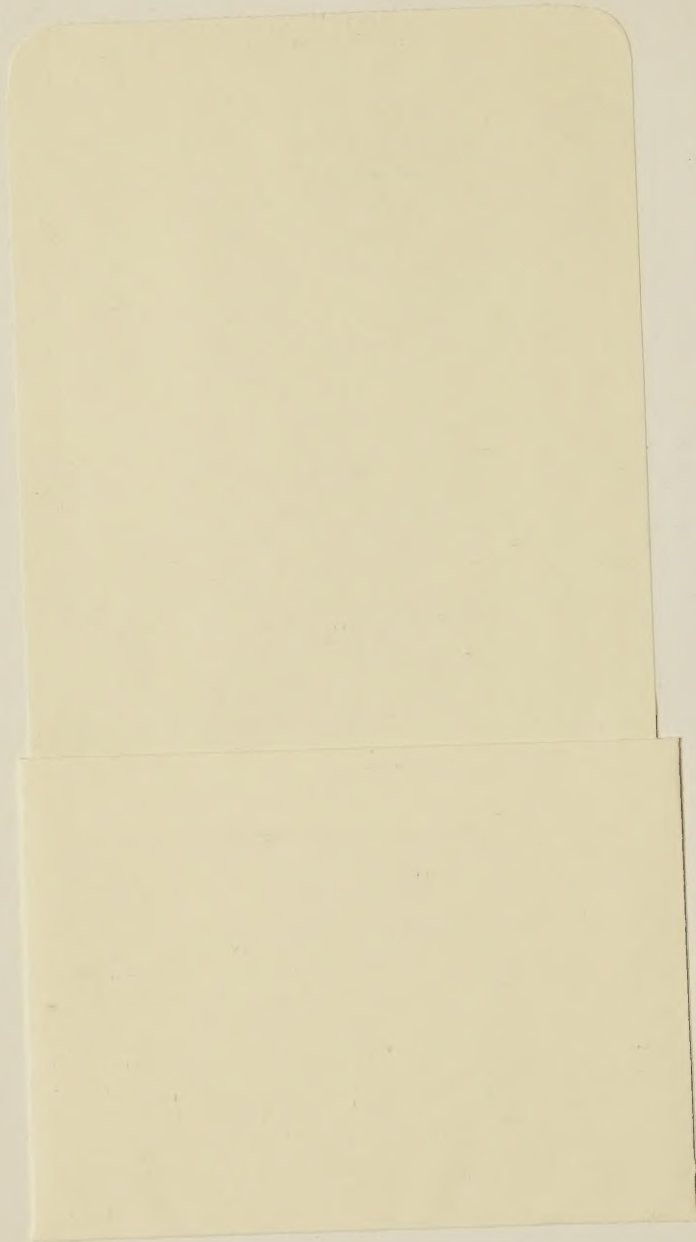




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